

Washington, D.C. - In her latest effort to combat the threat posed by shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles known as MANPADS (Man Portable Air Defense Systems), Congresswoman Melissa L. Bean today urged Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to maintain the Administration's commitment to protecting the American flying public from the threat posed by these weapons.

To address the threat of MANPADS, Bean supports both non-proliferation programs as well as developing defense systems for aircraft, which is the Administration's general approach. However, in light of the Administration's recent funding requests, Bean is urging a full commitment to both of those efforts.

Under the President's Fiscal Year 2007 budget proposal, the State Department's small arms counter-proliferation program would be reduced by \$100,000 to \$8.6 million; and the DHS Counter-MANPADS program to adapt a defense system for commercial aviation would see its funding go from \$110 million to just \$4.9 million.

In her letter to Rice, Bean commended the previous support of these increasingly successful programs, and urged the Administration to make them a priority. **"In order to provide the American people the best defense," she wrote, "I believe the Administration must more fully commit to the reduction of MANPADS available on the black market and provide counter-MANPADS systems to our commercial passenger jets."**

Last June, Bean joined Congressman Steve Israel of New York in introducing H.R. 2780, The Commercial Airlines Missile Defense Act, a bill which would authorize the government to supply proven missile defense systems similar to those used by the military to America's passenger jets.

Thousands of these easy-to-use missiles are already in the hands of terrorists, who have demonstrated their intention to use them. The State Department has estimated that since the 1970s, more than 40 civilian aircraft worldwide have been hit by MANPADS resulting in more than 600 deaths.

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